

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated May 2, 2006. In view of the foregoing amendments and following representations, reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Next, the specification and abstract have been amended to correct a number of minor informalities. Note that the changes to the abstract are presented in the form of a substitute abstract. No new matter has been added. Also enclosed is a "marked-up" copy of the original abstract to show the changes that have been incorporated into the substitute abstract. The enclosed copy is entitled "Version with Markings to Show Changes Made."

By the above amendment, claims 6 and 10 are amended; claims 7-9 are cancelled; and claims 15-16 are newly presented. Accordingly, claims 6, 10, 11, 15 and 16 are currently pending in the present application. Claims 1-5 and 12-14 have been withdrawn from consideration.

In response to the objection to claim 10 on page 2 (item 2) of the Office Action, claim 10 has been amended to correct a typographical error, thereby obviating the objection.

The rejection of claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph is now moot in view of the cancellation of claim 8.

Next, on page 3 (item 6) of the Office Action, original claim 6-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Masui et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,945,259). It is submitted that the present invention, as embodied by the amended claims, now clearly distinguishes over the Masui reference for the following reasons.

Independent claim 6 has been amended to clearly distinguish over the applied Masui

reference. In particular, claim 6 requires a rinsing step following a cleaning step. That is, claim 6 now recites the feature that a first nozzle cleans an inner wall of the cleaning cup, a second nozzle cleans an inner wall of the cleaning vessel, and a third nozzle cleans the surface of the object (substrate).

By the claimed method, by-products adhering to the inner wall of the cleaning cup and the inner wall of the cleaning vessel are removed by the cleaning liquid delivered from the first and second nozzles. At the same time, cleaning liquid from the third nozzle is delivered to the surface of the object (substrate). Note that the claimed features are described on page 12, line 19 to page 13, line 7 of the specification, as originally filed.

Thus, the method of the present invention, as defined in claim 6, ensures that by-products or any remaining chemical liquid on the cleaning vessel are safely and efficiently removed, thereby preventing reverse contamination of the object (substrate).

Masui discloses a method for cleaning a substrate (see Fig. 2). In the Masui method, the cleaning cup is cleaned in step (e) and the substrate is acid cleaned and rinsed in steps (a-d). The substrate is then alkaline cleaned and rinsed in steps (f-g). However, as shown in Fig. 5 of Masui, the cleaning cup 6 is cleaned while an acid liquid agent 13 is coated on the substrate 2 (see col. 7, lines 32-35). Accordingly, it is necessary to remove the acid liquid agent after the step of cleaning the cleaning cup. Therefore, it is not possible to prevent reverse contamination by the acid liquid agent.

Further, in the present invention, the cleaning liquid is supplied for a predetermined time onto the surface of the object (substrate) after completion of the operation of cleaning the inner

wall of the cleaning cup and the cleaning vessel. Thus, the cleaning liquid, including any by-product, drops from the cleaning cup and the cleaning vessel, and will not be dried on the surface of the object (see page 13, line 25 to page 14, line 5 of the specification).

In contrast, as shown in Fig 2 of Masui, the alkaline cleaning (step f) is performed after completion of the cup cleaning (step e). Accordingly, the method disclosed in the Masui reference does not address the problem of the by-product included in a cleaning liquid that may drop from a cleaning cup, or a drying step thereof.

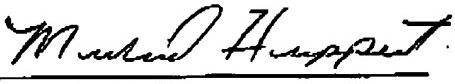
In view of the above, it is clear that the Masui reference does not disclose each and every limitation of claim 6, and therefore cannot anticipate claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e). Note that new independent claim 15 is allowable at least for the reasons described above in connection with claim 6.

Accordingly, it is submitted that the present application is now clearly in condition for allowance. The Examiner therefore is requested to pass this case to issue.

In the event that the Examiner has any comments or suggestions of a nature necessary to place this case in condition for allowance, then the Examiner is requested to contact Applicant's undersigned attorney by telephone to promptly resolve any remaining matters.

Respectfully submitted,

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August 1, 2006

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~~CLEANING APPARATUS AND CLEANING METHOD~~

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

~~In order to provide a~~ A cleaning apparatus and a cleaning method wherein cleaning and drying can be carried out in the same cleaning apparatus without the risk of reverse contamination of the cleaned object after the drying process, ~~process.~~ The~~a~~ cleaning apparatus includes~~comprises~~ a supporting device for supporting an object to be cleaned, and a cleaning cup surrounding ~~said~~ the supporting device to prevent splashing of a cleaning liquid, ~~said~~ liquid. The cleaning apparatus comprising: includes a cleaning device for cleaning an inner wall of ~~said~~ the cleaning cup with a cleaning liquid.